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EXCISE

10-24-17 Saigon 9291 (B)

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INFO SAL 01, SS 20, GPM 03, SP 02, SC 01, L 03, H 02, IO 21, P 04, USIE 00,
NSCE 00, DODE 00, CIAE 00, SSD 00, NSAE 00, NSC 10, INR 07, RSR 01,
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P R 240610Z OCT 67
FM AMEMBASSY SAIGON
TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 9453
INFO AMEMBASSY BANGKOK 4705
AMEMBASSY VIENTIANE 2878
CINCPAC
AMEMBASSY DANANG 1216

DEPARTMENT OF STATE A/CDC/MR
REVIEWED BY Joan Zenberg DATE 1/26/82
PORTIONS DENIED AS INDICATED

C O N F I D E N T I A L SAIGON 9291

CINCPAC FOR POLAD

SUBJ: LOWER HOUSE ELECTION: THE WINNERS IN BIEN HOA

REF: A) SAIGON 6663; B) SAIGON 8254; C) SAIGON 8867; D) SAIGON 9185

1. REFTELS REPORTED ON CANDIDATES RUNNING FOR THE FOUR BIEN HOA LOWER HOUSE SEATS AND DISCUSSED DISUNITY IN RANKS OF PREVIOUSLY MONOLITHIC NORTHERN CATHOLIC REFUGEE COMMUNITY, ONE-THIRD OF PROVINCE ELECTORATE. FAILURE OF REFUGEE CATHOLIC LEADERSHIP TO REACH UNANIMITY ON PREFERRED CANDIDATES, NOTED REFTELS C AND D, PREVENTED

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THEM FROM DOMINATING ELECTION; THUS BIEN HOA WILL HAVE RELATIVELY BALANCED LOWER HOUSE REPRESENTATION OF ONE

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NORTHERN CATHOLIC REFUGEE, ONE CENTRAL VIETNAMESE CATHOLIC, AND TWO SOUTHERNERS, CATHOLIC AND ONE BUDDHIST, BOTH WITH STRONG LOCAL TIES. THE WINNERS WERE:

A. TRAN MINH NHUT, 29, A BUDDHIST, 22,349 VOTES. NHUT, WHO GREW UP IN BIEN HOA, NOW WORKS AS AN ECONOMIST IN THE PRIME MINISTER'S OFFICE, AND, AS MIGHT BE

EXPECTED, IS IDENTIFIED WITH KY BY MANY PROVINCE OBSERVERS. OF ALL CANDIDATES, HE APPEARED TO BE MOST ACCEPTABLE TO ALL SIGNIFICANT GROUPS. BIEN HOA NATIVES SPOKE HIGHLY OF HIM AND HIS FAMILY, AND THE BULK OF THE BIEN HOA OFFICIALS WERE DECIDELY IN HIS CAMP. ALSO TO HIS CREDIT IS FACT THAT OTHERS, SUCH AS CVT AND NORTHERN CATHOLIC SOURCES, WHO WERE NOT BACKING NHUT, UNIFORMLY AGREED THAT HE WAS "QUALIFIED" AND WOULD MAKE A GOOD LOWER HOUSE MEMBER.

B. MAC GIAO, AKA PHAM HUU GIAO, 27 NORTHERN ATHOLIC, 21,415 VOTES. GIAO HAD ENDORSEMENT OF CENTRAL

COMMITTEE OF GREATER SOLIDARITY FORCES AND OF A NUMBER OF BIEN HOA PRIESTS, CHIEFLY FROM BUI CHU-PHAT DIEM AREA OF VVN, BUT LOCAL GSF BRANCH'S SUPPORT WAS DECIDELY TEPID. BULK OF BIEN HOA NORTHERN CATHOLIC POPULATION, ALTHOUGH ONLY ABOUT HALF OF LAY AND CLERICAL LEADERSHIP, IS FROM BUI CHU-PHAT DIEM, HOWEVER, AND THEY WERE APPARENTLY IMPRESSED BY THIS WELL KNOWN AND ARTICULATE YOUNG SAIGON JOURNALIST. SIZE OF GIAO'S VOTE SUGGESTS THAT HE MAY ALSO HAVE RECEIVED SIGNIFICANT NON-CATHOLIC SUPPORT.

C. CAO VAN CUA, 40, SOUTHERN CATHOLIC, 21,025 VOTES. CUA BENEFITED BOTH FROM HIS CATHOLICISM AND STRONG LOCAL TIES BUILT UP DURING HIS SEVERAL YEARS AS CHIEF OF POPULOUS DUC TU DISTRICT WHILE AN ARVN CAPTAIN. CUA HAS BEEN RETIRED FOR A YEAR AND A HALF. HE ENJOYS A

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REPUTATION AS HAVING BEEN A FAIR AND REASONABLY HONEST OFFICIAL, AND PROBABLY DREW SUPPORT FROM NORTHERN CATHOLICS AND "NATIVES" IN EQUAL PROPORTIONS.

D. NGUYEN KHAC TAN, 44, CENTRAL VN, CATHOLIC, 17,176 VOTES. TAN, NOW A SAIGON LAWYER, IS FROM HUE

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AND THUS WAS GENERALLY ACCEPTABLE TO ALL FACTIONS IN BIEN HOA REFUGEE CATHOLIC COMMUNITY. TAN IS BEST KNOWN AS ADVOCATE OF MAJOR DANG SI, WHO ORDERED TROOPS TO TO FIRE INTO CROWD OF DEMONSTRATING BUDDHISTS IN HE IN MAY, 1963 BEGINNING SERIES OF EVENTS WHICH PRECIPITATED DIEM'S DWNFALL. TAN WAS ONLY ONE OF FOUR WINNING CANDIDATES WHO WAS ENDORSED BY STORMY MEETING OF BIEN HOA CLERGY ON 19 OCTOBER (SEE REFTELS C AND D).

2. ALSO-RANS INCLUDED REFUGEE CATHOLICS CAO DINH HUE, (FIFTH WITH 16, VOTES) AND NGUYEN DUY BAO (SIXTH WITH 16,207 VOTES), PROVINCE CENSUS GRIEVANCE CHIEF LIEN THAT TRUONG, REPORTEDLY BUDDHIST (SEVENTH WITH 14,686 VOTES), NORTHERN CATHOLIC ARVN MAJOR NGUYEN HUU CHINH (EIGHTH WITH 14,683 VOTES), PROVINCE COUNCIL CHAIRMAN HO VAN TAM, A BUDDHIST (NINTH WITH 14,353 VOTES) AND NORTHERN CATHOLIC ARVN MAJOR PHAM GIA THUY (TENTH WITH 14,342 VOTES). LAST IN FIELD OF THIRTY WAS CATHOLIC PROVINCE COUNCILMAN DINH CONG NGHIEP (5,389 VOTES).

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3. PROVINCIAL TURNOUT OF 68.4 PERCENT WAS DOWN ABOUT TEN PERCENT FROM 3 SEPTEMBER FIGURE. AMERICAN OBSERVERS REPORT TAT VERY FEW, IF ANY, REGISTERED VOTERS WHO FAILED TO VOTE ON 3 SEPTEMBER WENT TO THE POLLS IN LOWER HOUSE ELECTION. VIET CONG ACTIVITY PRIOR TO AND DURING ELECTION DAY WAS MINIMAL. BUNKER

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